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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 BELMOPAN 000150

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G/TIP (FLECK), G, INL, PRM
DEPT FOR WHA/PPC (PUCCETTI), WHA/CEN (MACK)
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SUBJECT: BELIZE - SEVENTH ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP)
REPORT

REF: A) 06 State 202745
B) Belmopan 91
C) 06 Belmopan 93
D) 06 Belmopan 7
E) 06 Belize 974
F) 06 Belize 673
G) 06 Belize 668
H) 06 Belize 595
I) 06 Belize 593
J) 06 Belize 581

This cable is sensitive but unclassified.
Please protect accordingly.

11. (U) Responses are keyed to the checklist (paras 27-32)
in Ref. A.

12. (SBU) Overview of BelizeQs Activities to Eliminate Trafficking in
Persons

1A. Belize is a transit and destination country for internationally
trafficked men, women, and children. Trafficking occurs within the
country's borders primarily in the form of "sugar daddies" - adult men
who engage in sexual activity with pre-teen and teenage girls in
exchange for money or gifts, often with the consent of the girls'
parents. In November 2006 Belize, through an ILO/IPEC study,
acknowledged that the commercial sexual exploitation of children does
exist within its borders (Ref. E). Although the Government of Belize
(GoB) has maintained statistics on trafficking in persons since 2003,
the records are sparse. In the last year, the GoB's Anti-Trafficking
in Persons Committee has taken the lead to see that more thorough
records are maintained. The Police Department's Joint Information
Coordinating Center (JICC) is now responsible for gathering
intelligence from other agencies like Customs and Immigration and
collecting TIP data. Between June and August 2006, police conducted
six unannounced operations targeting suspected brothels, which resulted
in the identification of seven trafficking victims.

Trafficking, when compared to alien smuggling, is a small problem in
Belize. Most non-governmental organizations recognize that the problem
exists, but their limited resources have prevented them from addressing
it effectively. In 2006, the GoBQs Anti-Trafficking in Persons
Committee became the focal point for all government anti-TIP activities
in the country. In January, the CommitteeQs FY 2007 budget request of
\$106,000 was approved by the government (Ref. B). (Note: U.S. \$1

equals BZ \$2. End note). These funds will be used for public awareness campaigns, victim assistance programs, and anti-trafficking operations. In addition, in February PostQs request for US \$80,735 in Economic Support Funds (ESF) to build the capacity of the governmentQs victim assistance program was approved.

There is evidence that labor trafficking also exists in Belize, particularly in the citrus and banana regions of the country. UNICEFQs country representative in Belize stated that most agricultural workers come to Belize voluntarily but noted that there is some anecdotal evidence that some employers do withhold workersQ passports or demand sexual favors.

There are no particular groups that are targeted for trafficking through or to Belize. However, individuals with limited financial means may be more susceptible to it.

1B. The origins and composition of trafficking victims have not changed since the last report. However, Post saw an increase in political will last following last Spring's Tier 3 assessment. In 2006, Belize was placed on Tier 3 of the TIP Report but, after revitalizing the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee and committing funds and resources to combat TIP, the country was moved to Tier 2 Watch List. According to the NGOs in regular contact with commercial sex workers (CSWs), most trafficked women come to Belize to work as bar waitresses and are given lodging by the bar owners. After several weeks of legitimate waitress work, the women are "asked" to provide sexual services to the patrons. If they refuse, they are threatened with deportation or worse. In most cases, the bar owners take possession of the women's passports under the pretext of safeguarding them in case of a police raid. In other cases, school girls are encouraged by their parents to engage in sexual relations with older men as a way to pay for school books, uniforms, or other expenses.

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1C. Resources - both human and financial - continue to limit the government's ability to address TIP. Until recently, police and immigration officers were not trained in how to identify potential trafficking victims nor how to interview and treat them. Corruption among the ranks of police and immigration officers remained a problem. However, there have been improvements during the last year. Since June 2006, the government has provided training to police officers, immigration officials and social workers. The Embassy provided funding for GOB personnel to attend a regional workshop conducted in February. While the government has increased its efforts to raise awareness and protect victims, it has prosecuted few perpetrators.

1D. The government's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee, a multi-agency body, is tasked with coordinating and monitoring anti-trafficking activities in Belize. The Committee coordinated the anti-trafficking activities executed by the frontline agencies (e.g., police, immigration, Department of Human Services), including monitoring the movements of people within and outside BelizeQs borders for evidence of trafficking and screening for potential trafficking victims, and the gathering of intelligence. Periodically, the Committee reported its activities to the Cabinet. In addition, the Committee reported quarterly to Post.

13. (SBU) Prevention

1A. Although initially reluctant to do so, the government acknowledged that trafficking is a problem in Belize.

1B. The governmentQs Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee is comprised of representatives from the Ministries of Human Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, the Attorney GeneralQs Office, the Department of Immigration and Nationality (DINS), the Belize Police Department, the Labour Department, the Customs Department, the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP), the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN), and Youth Enhancement Services (YES) and is the lead agency for the governmentQs anti-trafficking efforts. The Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Human Development leads the Committee.

1C. Since June 2006, the government has run several anti-trafficking informational and educational campaigns using broadcast and print media. From June 5 through August 5, 2006 the government ran a nationwide bilingual (English and Spanish) public awareness campaign. Three public service announcements (PSAs) were aired on one of the country's two main television stations during the day. In addition, announcements aired three times daily on two radio stations - including Love FM, which broadcasts nationwide. The same PSAs also aired twice daily on smaller, district radio stations.

New PSAs were recorded in late June 2006 and were broadcast on the country's nationwide television stations, Channels 5 and 7. The announcements aired during the stations' newscasts, which were repeated three times per day.

Print PSAs were placed in the country's four major newspapers for eight weeks in August and September 2006.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) gave the Committee 200 posters and 200 brochures in both English and Spanish to complement the 500 posters printed by the government in July 2006. These posters and brochures were distributed countrywide to government offices, border crossing points, bus terminals, NGOs, justices of the peace, liquor licensing boards, and embassies.

Some local NGOs have questioned the effectiveness of the government's public awareness campaign, especially among at-risk groups such as commercial sex workers (CSWs). Because most CSWs keep non-traditional hours (i.e., sleeping until late in the day and working from late afternoon until the wee hours of the morning), they are not in a position to see, hear, or read the government's PSAs. In addition, these women are virtually confined to the neighborhood of their brothel/home and are unlikely to visit government offices, border crossing points, or bus terminals. One NGO suggested that strategically-placed billboards would be a more effective way to distribute information and would have a better chance of reaching the target audience.

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On June 28, 2006 Minister of Human Development Sylvia Flores, issued a major statement to the nation that described trafficking in persons and reiterated the government's commitment to combating it (Ref. H). Her statement also outlined the measures being taken to tackle the problem and encouraged victims to seek assistance. Finally, Minister Flores condemned trafficking-related corruption. Her address aired on two radio stations in the morning and at mid-day, and was rebroadcast the following day at mid-day and early evening.

Other government officials, including Minister of Home Affairs Ralph Fonseca and Anti-Trafficking Committee Chairperson Anita Zetina, have spoken out against TIP. Zetina appeared on several morning radio and television programs to share the government's anti-trafficking measures and tell victims how to receive assistance.

In July, members of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee met with members of Belize's Indian community to answer questions and explain trafficking in persons. (Note: It is not unusual for members of Belize's Indian community to hire Indian immigrants as servants. This meeting clarified issues such as the legality of holding an employee's passport as security for payment of indebtedness or otherwise. End note). Committee members also met with representatives from the Justices of the Peace Association, Liquor Licensing Boards, and municipalities to explain the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act.

In January 2007, new PSAs were recorded for broadcast on three radio stations. The announcements aired twice daily for two weeks. New print ads were placed in two newspapers in February 2007 and a new television PSA is under development and scheduled for broadcast in March.

1D. The government of Belize gives a monthly subvention (or stipend) to local NGOs that engaged in public awareness and training activities aimed at preventing trafficking in persons. During the year, these NGOs (e.g., NOPCAN and NCFC) worked with international organizations to

conduct training and sensitization courses for police, social workers, and other officials who may come in contact with victims of trafficking. The government also supported a joint initiative launched by the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) and End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT). Through this initiative, BTIA and ECPAT developed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in the Travel and Tourism Industry. BTIA invited tour guides and operators, taxi drivers, hoteliers and others working in the travel and tourism industry to sign on and adhere to the code of conduct.

The government also supported the efforts of the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) to identify victims of child labor and return them to traditional or vocational education programs. In 2005, the NCFC participated in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) regional pilot program and removed 49 children in Belize's Toledo district from their places of employment and returned them to school. Although the pilot phase of the project ended in 2006, the NCFC plans to expand the program to other parts of Belize.

1E. The government, NGOs, international organizations and other elements of civil society generally have a good working relationship. Members of relevant NGOs (such as NOPCAN), international organizations (such as IOM), and government officials worked together to offer training to stakeholders and often cooperated on relevant boards or committees. For example, representatives from several NGOs sit on the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee. However, local NGOs - which often receive some funding from the government - must walk a fine line between accurately reporting the trafficking situation in Belize and maintaining the favor of the Belize government. The director of one NGO told police that since his organization's office is located in a government building, he has to be careful about the extent to which he criticizes the government's actions. International organizations, such as UNICEF and IOM, and embassies (neither of which fear government reprisal or loss of government funding) are able to accurately report on and (if necessary) criticize the government's actions.

1F. The Department of Immigration and Nationality (DINS) monitors the movements of people within and outside the country's borders for evidence of trafficking. However, the department's meager resources

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limit its ability to effectively monitor immigration and emigration patterns and screen for potential trafficking victims. Immigration records are not computerized at any of the country's points of entry, including Philip Goldson International Airport in Belize City - the main port of entry for visitors to Belize. Special Branch, the intelligence gathering unit of the Belize Police Department, maintained a permanent presence at the Belize Western Border Station and at Philip Goldson International Airport. A police officer was assigned to the DINS at the Belize Northern Border Station to assist with monitoring immigration and emigration patterns and screening for potential victims of trafficking.

1G. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee is the focal point for all TIP issues within the government. The Committee is comprised of representatives from the Ministries of Human Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, the Attorney General's Office, the Department of Immigration and Nationality (DINS), the Belize Police Department, the Labour Department, the Customs Department, the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP), the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN), and Youth Enhancement Services (YES). The Committee is also the mechanism through which operations and training programs are planned.

While there is no public corruption task force, the government has appointed an ombudsman to investigate complaints against public officials and private citizens. The government also maintains an Integrity Commission to oversee compliance with financial disclosure laws.

1H. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee drafted a five-year national action plan to address trafficking in persons. All member agencies of the committee (see para 3G), as well as UNICEF, were

consulted in developing the plan. The plan was disseminated to member agencies of the Committee as well as the Committee's international partners.

14. (SBU) Investigation and Prosecution of Traffickers

1A. The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act was enacted on June 23, 2003 and came into force on August 1, 2003. The law prohibits both sexual and non-sexual (including forced labor and the illicit removal of human organs) forms of trafficking. Because the Act also includes the text of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, it covers both national and transnational forms of trafficking.

Belize laws prohibiting trafficking in persons include:

Under the Criminal Code: carnal knowledge; rape; procurement; defilement by force or fraud or administration of drugs; assault and battery; unlawful imprisonment; child stealing; abduction; kidnapping; and forcible marriage.

Under the Labour Act: prohibition of forced labor; employment of women and children; and prohibition of night work.

Under the Families and Children Act: child abuse; child neglect; and harmful employment.

Under the Summary Jurisdiction (Offenses) Act: loitering for prostitution; keeping a brothel; and trading on prostitution.

Laws that allow civil penalties against trafficking crimes include:

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act - restitution;
The Labour Act - fines;
The Intoxicating Liquor Licenses (Amendment) Act - forfeiture of license;
The Immigration Act - forfeiture of vehicle, vessel or aircraft;
payment of costs of sending the victim outside of Belize;
The Families and Children Act;
The Summary Jurisdiction (Offenses) Act - determination of tenancy; and
The Indictable Procedure Act - divesting of guardianship or custody.

1B. Under the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act, an individual convicted of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation can receive

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between one and five years in prison and/or a fine of \$10,000. (Note: U.S. \$1 equals BZ \$ 2. End note). In addition, an individual convicted of transporting a person for the purpose of exploiting such person as a prostitute can receive a prison sentence of not less than three years. Further, the prison term may be extended to eight years when the number of persons transported exceeds five, when the persons transported include children, or when the transportation is part of the activity of a gang or organized criminal network.

1C. The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act also prescribes and imposes penalties for labor trafficking offenses. The Act defines labor exploitation as: keeping a person in a state of slavery; subjecting a person to practices similar to slavery; compelling or causing a person to provide forced labor or services; or keeping a person in a state of servitude, including sexual servitude. The Act also provides for criminal punishment against any person who acts or purports to act as another's employer, manager, supervisor, contractor, employment agency or solicitor of clients and knowingly procures, destroys, conceals, removes, confiscates, or possesses any passport, birth certificate, immigration document or other governmental document belonging to another person.

1D. Rape - including marital rape - carries a penalty of eight years to life imprisonment. Life imprisonment is mandated for habitual sex offenders. (Note: the majority of rape convictions result in penalties far less than life imprisonment. End note). The Criminal Code of Belize does not define sexual assault, but categorizes any such assaults as Aggravated assault, and the penalty for which is two years imprisonment. The law further states that an Indecent assault

assault upon a female, or male or female child will result in three years imprisonment.

¶E. The act of prostitution itself is neither legal nor illegal under Belize law. The government considers prostitution immoral but has yet to take steps to directly address it in the Criminal Code. Other activities on the periphery of prostitution are illegal. For example, loitering by a Qcommon prostituteQ in any street or public place for the purpose of prostitution is illegal. On a first offense, a person can be fined no more than \$200 or imprisoned for up to two months. Second and subsequent offenses result in fines of up to \$400 or imprisonment of up to six months. In addition, the Summary Jurisdiction (Offenses) Act states that it is illegal to own, manage, assist in the management of, or act as a tenant, lessee or occupier of a brothel. First-time offenses are punishable by up to six months in jail or a \$500 fine; for second offenses the penalties are doubled. Further, the law states that it is illegal for any male person to: knowingly live wholly or in part on the earnings of prostitution; persistently solicit or importune for immoral purposes; or loiter about or importune a person in any street or other place for the purposes of prostitution. A first offense results in a fine of up to \$100 or six months in jail; second and subsequent offenses result in up to twelve months in jail. Finally, Section 49 of the Criminal Code states that Qany person who procures or attempts to procure any female under the age of eighteen years of age, not being a common prostitute or of known immoral character, to have unlawful carnal knowledge either within or without Belize any other person or personsQQ has committed an offense. The Code does not explain what constitutes Qimmoral character.Q (Note: unlawful carnal knowledge is defined as sexual relations with a female child between the ages of 14 and 16. End note). An individual convicted of these charges faces five years imprisonment.

¶F. There were no successful prosecutions against traffickers during the reporting period. However, two individuals were arrested on trafficking offenses. The first, Jitendra Chawla (aka Jack Charles), was charged with six counts of unlawfully withholding travel documents - an offense under the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act (Ref. J). In January, the case was dismissed when Chawla's attorney pointed out that the defendant was identified as Jitendra Chawla in court documents while one of the alleged victims identified him as Jack Charles (Ref. B). The second case, against bar owner Amparo Zetina (Ref. F), is still pending.

UNICEF describes the country's judicial system as a Qblack hole," noting that TIP cases - along with rape and sexual abuse cases - are rarely prosecuted successfully. The November 2006 ILO/IPEC report on the commercial sexual exploitation of children supports this (Ref. E). According to the report, the majority of Supreme Court criminal cases involving sexual offenses resulted in acquittals or Qnolle prosequi"

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(the prosecutor declines to proceed).

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act requires the prosecution of labor trafficking offenses such as the confiscation of workers' travel documents, the switching of contracts or employment terms without the worker's consent, the use of physical or sexual abuse or the threat of such abuse to keep workers in a state of service, or the withholding of salary as a means to keep workers in a state of service. According to the law, convicted traffickers must serve their entire sentence.

¶G. There is no reliable information pointing to who is behind trafficking in Belize. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most are freelance operators or members of a loose network of taxi drivers and brothel owners. One Embassy source who works closely with commercial sex workers (Note: please protect, as this source can be identified by the description of her work. End note) reported that at least two men (one of whom is believed to be an American citizen) are involved in the trafficking of Honduran women to the Orange Walk district of Belize. This same source reported at least one instance of government involvement: she overheard a conversation between these two men in which one stated that he would pay \$200 to QChan" or QChen" in Immigration for each woman he smuggled into the country. (Note: because an American citizen may be involved, Post's RSO is investigating. End note). There is no evidence of employment, travel,

or tourism agencies or marriage brokers fronting for traffickers. Post does monitor terrorism financing and money laundering, but to date we have no information about where TIP profits are being channeled.

¶H. Investigations are coordinated by the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee. The Committee uses a Qtripartite" approach: all trafficking investigations involve police, immigration officials, and social workers.

¶I. During the reporting period the government, in conjunction with the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee and a number of NGOs and international organizations, offered specialized training to government officials in how to recognize, investigate, and prosecute trafficking. For example, the government offered training to magistrates and crown counsels, police and immigration officials on TIP legislation, identification of the elements of trafficking, and investigative and prosecution techniques.

During the year the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Chairperson of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee conducted a sensitization session on trafficking. The program targeted police, customs officials, labor officers, immigration officers and social workers. In August, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) sponsored a workshop that dealt with psychosocial intervention for trafficking victims. In November, the Organization of American States (OAS) sponsored a two-day training session for Belizean and Guatemalan officials who work along the Belize-Guatemala border. The training focused on the elements of trafficking, cross-border issues, international and regional obligations, the role of NGOs and best practices. Finally, government officials participated in training offered by the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA).

¶J. The government of Belize does cooperate with other governments on trafficking issues, including the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. On April 26, 2006, the government agreed to participate in the Latin American Network for Missing Persons (Red Latinoamericanos Desaparecidos). The network aims to identify and reunite thousands of missing persons in Latin America, especially those who might be at high-risk of being trafficked Q particularly minors. Belize was the eighth country in the hemisphere to sign onto this regional initiative. Members of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee participated in IOM's Caribbean Counter-Trafficking Initiative meeting to discuss counter-trafficking strategies and regional cooperation. The government, which assumed the presidency of the Central American Integration System (SICA) in January, has also pledged to place regional TIP cooperation at the top of its agenda.

According to the government of Belize, to date no other country has requested assistance or cooperation in trafficking matters. The government stands ready to cooperate with other governments in the region to address trafficking.

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¶K. The government will extradite persons when an extradition treaty exists between Belize and the requesting state. The treaty between the United States and Belize lists trafficking in persons as an extraditable offense. According to the government of Belize, to date no state with which Belize has an extradition treaty has requested the extradition of a suspected trafficker. Belizean nationals are also subject to extradition for certain offenses, including trafficking in persons.

¶L. As noted in para 4G, Post has received reports of government involvement in or tolerance of trafficking in persons. In addition to the example above, the same source reported at least 51 instances of trafficking-related tolerance or corruption. She told poloff that police and immigration officials in the Orange Walk district regularly demand sexual favors from commercial sex workers (many of whom may be trafficking victims) to avoid deportation or worse. The source stated that she had not shared this information with police, believing that most police officials are corrupt.

¶M. To Post's knowledge, there have been no government investigations into allegations of official corruption or tolerance of trafficking,

nor have there been any prosecutions or convictions.

¶N. Although Belize has not been identified as a sex tourism destination, the potential exists and the November 2006 release of the report (sponsored by the International Labour Office's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Belize supports this. As noted in para 3D, the government supported the drafting of a code of conduct to protect children from sexual exploitation in the tourist and travel industries.

The government of Belize has prosecuted four foreign pedophiles; all were from the United States. Of those four, one was deported back to the U.S. In addition, Belize extradited a U.S. national who was a convicted sex offender hiding in Belize.

¶O. The government has signed or ratified the following international instruments:

- ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor: ratified March 6, 2000

- ILO Convention 29 and 105 on Forced or Compulsory Labor: both ratified on December 15, 1983

- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography: ratified on December 1, 2003

- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime: acceded September 26, 2003.

¶5. (SBU) Protection and Assistance to Victims

¶A. The government of Belize offers assistance to victims of trafficking by providing temporary residency, shelter at a secure location, food and clothing, and free access to legal, medical and psychological care though such resources are in limited supply even to their own citizens. The victim's consular representative is also notified. During the reporting period the government identified two shelters for trafficking victims, one in Belmopan and one in Hattieville in the Belize district. Children who are victims of trafficking are placed in existing child care institutions. If necessary, victims can also be housed in hotels at government expense.

¶B. The government provided a monthly subvention to domestic NGOs (such as NOPCAN, Youth Enhancement Services, Marla's House of Hope and Haven House) that aid trafficking victims. Although the government does not have the resources to offer assistance to foreign NGOs, it does support their activities and participates in or co-sponsors joint programs when it can.

¶C. Law enforcement and social services personnel received extensive training during the year on the identification and interviewing of potential trafficking victims. When a person is identified as a

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potential victim, the Department of Human Services (under the Ministry of Human Development) is immediately notified and a social worker is deployed to conduct an interview. If, after the interview, the social worker believes the individual is a victim of trafficking, he or she is placed in protective custody. In some cases, the victims do not want to be protected and only desire to return to their place of employment.

¶D. According to Belize law, victims of trafficking should not be jailed, deported or penalized in any way. The law states that the victim is not criminally liable for any immigration-related offense or any other criminal offense. The law also requires that victims receive temporary permits that allow them to remain in Belize for the duration of any criminal proceedings and can qualify for residency or citizenship. In practice, however, it is unclear if these laws have ever been applied in a trafficking case. As noted in para 5C, many victims do not view themselves as victims of trafficking and do not

wish to pursue criminal action against their traffickers. In other cases, commercial sex workers who may be victims are mistreated or victimized further (see para 4L).

¶E. Victims of trafficking can file civil suits and seek legal action against traffickers. The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act authorizes courts to order convicted traffickers to pay restitution to their victims. The court considers the costs of medical and psychological care, physical and occupational therapy, transportation, housing and child care, lost income, emotional distress, pain and suffering, and any other loss suffered by the victim when determining the amount of restitution. The government lacks the resources to provide a formal restitution program.

¶F. The government provides security - in the form of police protection - to victims, their families and witnesses. This protection is provided on an as-needed basis; there is no formal witness protection program and the country's population is likely too small to create an effective program.

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act requires that court proceedings for all TIP cases be held in camera, and the court is required to ensure that the identity of the victim and his/her family remains confidential. No identifying information may be released to the public or press.

¶G. See para 4I. The government's ability to maintain and staff embassies and consulates is limited. As a result, there are only a few Belize embassies and consulates worldwide all with small staffs. The Belize Embassy in the U.S. has established a relationship with the NGO Save the Children, Sweden. Through this relationship, the government was invited to participate in the Latin American Network for Missing Persons.

¶H. If needed, the Belize government will provide medical assistance, shelter, and financial aid to any Belizean national who is a victim of trafficking and has been repatriated to Belize.

¶I. Local NGOs such as the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN) and Youth Enhancement Services (YES) work with trafficking victims and focus on trafficking issues. International organizations like UNICEF and IOM also provide assistance. The Inter American Development Bank (IDB) approved funding to the government for assistance in strengthening national protocols, including victim assistance, for trafficking in persons.

¶6. (U) Best practices

The government of Belize employs a multi-sectoral approach to combating trafficking in persons. This method strengthens coordination among frontline agencies, ensures a victim-centered approach to combating TIP, and leads to direct and efficient delivery of services to victims. This multi-sectoral approach led to the development of a tripartite team comprised of the police, immigration officials, and social workers who are responsible for the planning, execution and evaluation of operations - thereby ensuring that operations are intelligence-driven. Social workers are present at every operation to make certain that victims receive immediate assistance.

¶7. Post's POC for trafficking and human rights issues until May 2007 is poloff Stacie R. Hankins, email: hankinssr@state.gov; telephone:

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011-501-822-4011, ext. 4113; fax: 011-501-822-4012. After May the POC will be Suzanne Kuester.

¶8. Post estimates that over the course of the year, poloff (FS-03) has spent approximately 50 hours gathering information, meeting with government officials, and preparing reports on trafficking in persons in Belize.

DIETER